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ABSTRACT

An overview is presented of the educational services offered by the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC-W) to two local military installations. The paper examines the historical basis for providing educational services to the military; the Woodbridge Campus's long-term commitment to serving the military community; and the special needs of active-duty military personnel. The paper describes the operations of the campus programs on the two installations, focusing on active communication, cooperation, administrative liaison, and integration of resources. This section offers specific examples of campus and base services provided to respond to the needs of the military student. A discussion is then presented of the methods used to develop courses, disseminate course information, and teach the courses offered. Finally, the paper analyzes quality control mechanisms with respect to maintaining and improving academic standards. (LAL)

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SERVING THE MILITARY: ONE CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The presence of military installations in the service area of a community college campus calls for conscientious efforts and proactive approaches to providing quality courses and programs, supported with strong student services. This campus perspective includes a comprehensive summary of educational activities extended to two military installations, Fort Belvoir (Army) and Quantico (Marines). The historical basis for providing these services and activities, the Woodbridge Campus perspective and mission, and the joint efforts of Northern Virginia Community College (administration, teaching faculty, librarians, and student development and business office personnel) to most effectively meet the needs of the active-duty servicemember will be discussed and delineated. Active communication, cooperation, liaison partnership and integration of resources will be emphasized and supported with specific examples of campus and base services presently being provided to respond to the needs of the military student.

An assessment of the need for certain types of courses and programs is presented with an explanation of timely delivery to satisfy the military student in his/her off-duty hours. This essay also analyzes various aspects of quality control in regard to maintaining and improving academic standards at Fort Belvoir and Quantico. This is to ensure a high standard of educational services to the active-duty servicemember.

SERVING THE MILITARY: ONE CAMPUS PERSPECTIVE

Lionel B. Sylvas and James A. Mustachio

This article focuses on a description of the educational services provided by one campus of a multicampus institution to active-duty service members on two military installations.

Historical View

During the latter part of the eighteenth century the United States military, under the leadership and direction of General George Washington, expressed its concerns for educational services for the active-duty servicemember. Since the 1770's this nation turned these or such concerns into realities, at least in part, by establishing a number of military colleges and universities to broaden the base of sound teaching and learning experiences. In addition, the military addressed its needs by providing its personnel with education and training through various command and staff colleges and unique service schools (Bailey, 1979).

As the military grew and expanded throughout the country and the world, it became quite clear that post-secondary institutions could be utilized and would be needed to offer academic courses and programs to the servicemember in off-duty classroom situations. In fact, after World War II, there was an increased emphasis on higher education for the servicemember, both in active-duty and reserve status. Of particular importance were the efforts of the military to bring college and university instruction to the active-duty servicemember at convenient locations and during off-duty hours. Colleges and universities responded.

Focus on Mission

Over the past 11 years the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College has attempted, through educational services, to maintain and

further an historical tradition of cooperation and support with the military. The campus has attracted a cohort of people who might not otherwise have participated in academic work beyond high school. This is simply in keeping with the mission of the college which is to function within the Virginia Community College System and the total educational community. This educational community includes the U. S. Army Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir and the Marine Corps Development and Educational Command at Quantico. The college mission is accomplished through offering to the military community courses and programs of instruction encompassing post-secondary occupational-technical education, college transfer education, general education, development and remedial education, specialized training, community services, and cooperative education. These activities are complemented by various student development and learning resource services. The Woodbridge Campus has provided educational services to the active-duty servicemember with ardent interest and with a sense of presence. These services are specifically designed and developed for Fort Belvoir and Quantico. The faculty and staff consider the educational opportunities at the two military bases an extension of campus programs. The same efforts are extended and the same standards and practices are applied to the quality of teaching and learning as well as the employment of lecturers at the military bases as they are at the home campus.

A Point of View

It is important to state that the Woodbridge Campus views the educational and support services that it provides to two nearby military installations as an integral part of campus operations. This point of view has developed because the services provided at these military installations hold a vital place in the history of the campus and because of the geographical proximity of the installations in relation to the campus. The army post is about ten miles

north of the campus with the Marine base approximately ten miles south. Courses and support services provided at the military locations were, from the beginning, a major part of campus operations; they were a focal point of the early creative energy of the campus. Today, the initial perception remains. The services provided at the military bases are simply part of the campus. This is significantly different from the point of view that commonly describes educational services to the military as off-campus operations.

The significance of this point of view lies in the impact that it has on the campus approach to administering services. The discipline of psychology teaches that "behavior is a function of the individuals' perceptions" (Combs and Snygg, 1959). It is believed that this is also true for an organization; that is, organizational behavior is, in part, a function of the organizational perceptions. To know how the campus views its various functions is to begin to understand how the campus acts to carry out these functions. Functions that are viewed as a central part of the campus are going to be approached quite differently than those functions which are considered peripheral.

Responding to Student Needs

The increased emphasis on access to American higher education in recent years has resulted in large numbers of students, with different aptitudes and complex styles of learning, being admitted to colleges and universities. Northern Virginia Community College, like other similar urban institutions, welcomes this challenge with appropriate background and experience gained over the years through the open-door admission policy. The college has offered diversified programs of instruction in order to meet the demands of students in the metropolitan area of Washington, D.C. This area, including several military installations, has had a tremendous amount of influence on the direction that NVCC has taken in regard to course scheduling. For the Woodbridge

Campus this means that educational services are delivered at Fort Belvoir and Quantico in accordance with their requests. The campus administration has taken the position that whatever the needs and emphases might be at the respective bases, accommodating these needs is the first order of business. Whether the request is for an accelerated course or an out-of-sequence offering, the campus personnel are there to effectively and efficiently respond. This is in accordance with the philosophy of the Woodbridge Campus that if it is to successfully provide academic opportunities to the servicemember then it will have to understand the military environment and the needs of the military population.

The servicemember may bring special needs to the classroom. He/she may be attempting to attend college while simultaneously maintaining a work schedule with shift work and/or free changing hours/commitments. The military student also may be able to attend classes on base because they are accessible and yet may lack the transportation to the nearby campus and its resources. Such situations, along with others, require recognition, awareness and flexibility on the part of campus personnel to assist the servicemember in every way possible to reach academic success.

Even though most of the attention is given to the military student, other kinds of students find their way into the on-base classroom. Some of these students include dependents of the military servicemember, federal workers whose jobs are on base, and residents who live near the military post. The needs that these students bring to teachers, counselors, administrators and classified staff necessitate getting everyone involved from board members and the president to college personnel in general.

Administrative Liaison and Joint Participation

The campus operates at both military installations by invitation and under articles set forth in memoranda of understanding. These memoranda are somewhat

similar for both military bases. Essentially, they outline the responsibilities of both parties and they stipulate that a contact representative from the campus shall be designated to maintain continuing liaison. The campus office of continuing education has been charged with these liaison responsibilities which include: maintaining an official point of contact between the military education offices and the campus, providing input into the use of military facilities for campus programs and services, and coordinating programs and services that are provided to the bases. However, administrative services are not left with one campus unit.

Administrative liaison often involves initiating and strengthening the relationship between the college, as a whole, and the military, to include all branches and installations in the service area. For example, information concerning the military student and the educational services provided were recently presented at a luncheon hosted by NVCC and attended by representatives of the military. The representatives included base commanding generals, educational service officers, and other related personnel located at military installations served by the college. The administrative council of NVCC also attended the luncheon. The college president and provosts from the Woodbridge Campus and Alexandria Campus presented remarks on educational services presently being offered and those expected to be offered in the future.

The concept of joint participation is important in addressing cooperative efforts between the campus personnel and the military base staff. The Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College is interested in fully understanding and appreciating the educational needs of the military student whether he/she is pursuing part-time study for avocational interests, strengthening of certain career skill areas, or developing a new career objective. Where active-duty military personnel are located in large numbers, as they are

in Northern Virginia, it becomes quite necessary for campus personnel to be sensitive to the needs of those individuals who have unique working conditions.

Course and Instructional Development

Routinely, the Woodbridge Campus administrative staff consisting of the academic division chairmen, director of continuing education, and the campus provost, assess the need for courses to be offered either at Fort Belvoir or Quantico. This process is implemented on a term-by-term basis working directly with the education service officers. Prior to each quarter the education service officers from Fort Belvoir and Quantico prepare a listing of courses that are requested for a specific term. This listing of courses is submitted to the campus provost for consideration and approval. The campus provost and his staff make the final decision on what courses will be offered and published in the class schedule. The class schedule is distributed throughout the campus service area. The courses are generally offered in the evening on base to afford off-duty education to the servicemember. As a convenience to the servicemember with unusual working conditions, the campus also makes "out-of-sequence" classes avialable. Within reasonable limits an attempt is made, through the education service officer, to find a day and time that the class can be scheduled. This is coordinated through the office of continuing education.

The courses offered at Fort Belvoir and Quantico are usually taught in the lecture format to include a mix of college transfer and vocational-technical courses. Data processing, for example, is presently a high demand program. To extend data processing laboratory services to the military student, the Woodbridge Campus is in the process of establishing microcomputer laboratories at Fort Belvoir and Quantico for the 1984-85 academic year. This will greatly assist the data processing classes and will enable instructors and students

from other disciplines to also have access to these labs. Plans for the data processing laboratories have been developed in close cooperation with the education service officers. The education service officers are providing the laboratory facility and furniture.

Quality Control

The American Association for Higher Education has published a monograph on the subject of college programs on military bases. This monograph provides a number of guidelines for measuring the quality of programs. The first guideline advises: "Home campuses (should) exert the same efforts and maintain the same standards and procedures in hiring instructional personnel off-campus as on-campus" (Bailey, 1979). At Woodbridge, the off-campus versus on-campus problem involved in providing services to the military has, in large measure, been solved. The various services are approached and provided as campus operations.

The Woodbridge Campus ensures a carefully supervised educational program for the benefit of the military student. Through the campus provost, as the academic and administrative head, and members of the provost staff various levels of quality control are maintained. Academic standards at Fort Belvoir and Quantico are the same as they are on campus. It is the primary responsibility of the director of continuing education to insure that there is constant interaction between the education service officers and Woodbridge Campus faculty and administration. The director of continuing education with assistance from the campus provost, academic division chairmen, and the education service officers provides for consistent reviews of on-base course offerings.

The campus academic divisions maintain the responsibility for the academic quality of credit offerings. Through the selection of faculty, the monitoring of course content and the evaluation of instruction, the divisions make certain

that academic standards at Fort Belvoir and Quantico are the same as they are on campus. The campus student development office maintains the responsibility for providing counseling as well as admission and registration services to the military bases. The campus learning resource center interfaces with the military base libraries to review holdings and assist with acquisitions that will support course offerings. The learning resource center also provides audio-visual equipment support to certain course offerings at the military location that otherwise would not have access to this type of equipment. The campus business office provides support through assistance with on-base registration and textbook sales. And, the provost takes an active role in overseeing campus operations as they are applied to the military location.

In addition to the campus full-time faculty, part-time faculty (lecturers) are employed by NVCC to assist in providing instructional services to the servicemember. According to Hammons, Wallace, and Watts (1978) a considerable number of community college courses are taught by lecturers, and in some cases part-time teachers comprise 40% to 60% of the faculty. At Fort Belvoir and Quantico the percentage of part-time teachers is approximately 65%, with 35% full-time faculty.

To be located in the greater Washington, D. C., area allows for a rich and extensive amount of expertise in part-time teachers who have masters and doctorate degrees and years of job-related experience. Some of the lecturers employed reside either at Fort Belvoir or Quantico. The part-time faculty are able to bring to the classroom vast knowledge of the subject matter being taught, up-to-date appreciation and understanding in the subject field, and flexibility to blend their job schedule with the college class times. Together with a highly qualified full-time faculty, the Woodbridge Campus is able to create and maintain an atmosphere of successful teaching and learning for the

military student. The key point is that the educational services that are provided to the military receive full support of the campus.

Summary

Throughout this paper the focus has been on developing and maintaining cooperative and supportive arrangements between the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College and Fort Belvoir and Quantico military installations. Because NVCC believes in its commitment to function within the total educational community, the Woodbridge Campus's role is to continue to provide quality educational services to these locations. Maintaining a sound balance of coordination, information, and communication is a high priority item for campus personnel and military education service staffs in order to ensure a high standard of education for the servicemember. The Woodbridge Campus accepts the challenge of continuously meeting the educational needs of the military student by providing sound academic courses complemented by strong student support services.

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